

Message Text

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SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF OMAN COUNTRY GUIDANCE
PAPER

REF: FEB 12 MOLINEAUX DRAFT PAPER

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY AGREES WITH BASIC THRUST OF REFERENCED
DRAFT COUNTRY GUIDANCE PAPER. WITH ONE EXCEPTION, COMMENTS
BELOW (KEYED TO MOLINEAUX DRAFT) ESSENTIALLY DEAL WITH
QUESTIONS OF EMPHASIS OR MINOR DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION
BETWEEN EMBASSY AND WASHINGTON. SINGLE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE
WHICH SHOULD BE RECONCILED IS THAT CONCERNING RELATIONSHIPS
WITH "CORRUPT" ELEMENTS, EITHER PRIVATE OR GOVERNMENTAL.
AS STATED IN EMBASSY'S ORIGINAL POLICY ASSESSMENT, WE
SHOULD DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM THESE INsofar AS IS
POSSIBLE. WE CURRENTLY DO SO. AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST
RECOGNIZE THAT DEFINITION AND APPLICATION OF THE ANATHEMA
STEMS FROM OUR OWN ETHICAL CONCEPTS MORE THAN FROM PRESENTLY
HELD LOCAL ATTITUDES OR LEGAL DETERMINATIONS. FURTHERMORE,
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, SYSTEM OF GRAFT SEEMINGLY IS SO
PERVASIVE THAT A GREAT MANY AMONG THE POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC ELITE ARE TAINTED BY IT. CONVERSELY, THOSE
OMANIS CONCEIVED TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST MOST OFTEN
ARE NOT IN POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY. THIS BROAD
DENUNCIATION MAY BE OVERDRAWN, BUT WE STATE IT IN
ORDER TO POINT OUT IMPRACTICABILITY OF REFUSAL TO
DEAL WITH THE INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED, HOWEVER APPEALING THAT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 MUSCAT 00208 290911Z

MIGHT BE (CERTAIN CABINET MINISTERS WOULD BE CASE IN

POINT). END SUMMARY.

2. PAGE 2, FIRST FULL PARAGRAPH. 26-MILE WIDE STRAITS OF HORMUZ ARE CERTAINLY AMENABLE TO INTERDICTION IF NOT COMPLETE BLOCKADE. A VERY SMALL BUT AGGRESSIVE NAVAL FORCE COULD EFFECTIVELY SEAL OFF THIS PASSAGE. PENULTIMATE SENTENCE IMPLIES THAT OMAN DOES NOT SHARE INTEREST IN UNIMPEDED PASSAGE THROUGH STRAITS. ALTHOUGH PAPER CORRECTLY STATES THAT OMANI PETROLEUM OUTLETS ARE NOT DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY GULF PASSAGE, THIS IS INSUFFICIENT REASONING TO IMPLY LACK OF INTEREST IN UNIMPEDED PASSAGE. EVEN OMANGOV POLICY FAVORING INNOCENT PASSAGE IS NOT CONTRADICTORY WITH WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE SINCERE DEVOTION TO KEEPING STRAITS OPEN FOR OIL, COMMERCE AND FRIENDLY NAVAL ACTIVITY. SIMILARLY, WHILE PRO-WESTERN, STABLE GOVERNMENTS IN AREA WOULD ENHANCE IMMEDIATE USG INTERESTS, WE CANNOT DEDUCE THAT PRESENCE OF HOSTILE REGIMES AUTOMATICALLY WOULD LEAD TO CLOSURE OF STRAITS (E.G. WITNESS BAB AL MANDEB).

3. RE PAGE 3 STATEMENT CONCERNING POSSIBLE ASSUMPTION OF POWER BY RADICAL REGIME, "EVER" IS A VERY LONG TIME.

4. EMBASSY WOULD SUGGEST REWORDING LAST THREE SENTENCES ON PAGE 3 AS FOLLOWS: "HE IS EXCESSIVELY DEPENDENT ON CORRUPT ADVISORS, ANY OF THEM EXPATRIATES. HE IS RECLUSIVE AND HAS NOT DEVELOPED THE PERSONAL POLITICAL FLAIR REQUIRED OF A NATIONAL LEADER IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE 20TH CENTURY. HENCE, THERE IS A POSSIBILITY FOR POLITICAL INSTABILITY OVER THE MID-TERM FUTURE; AT PRESENT, CHALLENGES TO QABOOS' LEADERSHIP WOULD BE MOTIVATED BY PERSONAL DISSATISFACTION AND OPPORTUNISM RATHER THAN BY IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT."

5. RE FIRST COMPLETE SENTENCE ON PAGE 5, USG "INTEREST" IN CONTAINING PDRY/PFLO RADICALISM PRESUMABLY REMAINS HIGH, ALTHOUGH IMMEDIATE COURSES OF ACTION MAY BE LESS URGENT GIVEN RECENT OMANGOV SUCCESS IN COUNTERING THE MILITARY THREAT.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 MUSCAT 00208 290911Z

6. AT TWO PLACES IN FIRST INCOMPLETE PARAGRAPH, TOP OF PAGE 6, REFERENCE IS MADE TO CONCEIVABLY DISSIDENT GROUPS. EMBASSY WOULD ONLY POINT OUT THAT NO IDENTIFIABLE OPPOSITION GROUPS OTHER THAN PFLO EXIST. ALTHOUGH WE ANTICIPATE THAT KINDRED INTERESTS WOULD DRAW INDIVIDUALS TOGETHER, TO DATE THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT DISSATISFACTION HAS LED TO FORMATION OF NUCLEUS WHICH MIGHT TAKE ISSUE WITH PRESENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

7. IDEA OF ESCHEWING ASSOCIATION WITH NON-PRODUCTIVE OR DETRIMENTAL PROJECTS AND INDIVIDUALS IS MOST APPEALING. HOWEVER, (AGAIN ON PAGE 6), IT SIMPLY IS NOT POSSIBLE TO "AVOID DEALING ENTIRELY WITH NOTORIOUSLY CORRUPT ELEMENTS . . ." LIKEWISE, CATERING TO SULTANIC WHIMS IS SOMETIMES BEYOND USG IMMEDIATE CONTROL (E.G. SALE OF ROYAL AIRCRAFT AND ARMORED LIMOUSINES THAT APPEAR EXCESSIVE TO REAL NEEDS).

8. STATEMENT AT TOP OF PAGE 7 IS MORE PASSIVE THAN WE BELIEVE USG POLICY SHOULD BE. ASSUMING THIS YEAR'S CIVIL PROGRAM WORKS WELL, EMBASSY INDICATES MORE ACTIVE PROGRAM OF SEEKING OUT PROMISING OMANI LEADERS AND CURRYING THEIR FAVOR THROUGH SUCH DEVICES AS VISITS TO U.S. THIS MAY IMPLY INCREASED FUNDING BEYOND THE "ON-GOING MODEST USIA AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMS . . ." AND COULD LEAD TO AN EMBASSY PROPOSAL FOR FULLER CULTURAL AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES HEADED BY RESIDENT PAO.

9. WHILE EMBASSY AGREES (PAGE 8) THAT WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURAL AREA, WE GO

BACK TO ANALYSIS IN OUR INITIAL POLICY ASSESSMENT THAT SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN THIS AREA IS UNACHIEVABLE. AGRICULTURE SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO PETROLEUM IN TERMS OF GENERATING GOVERNMENT REVENUES, WHETHER DIRECT OR THROUGH COST OFFSETS.

10. IN PARA C ON PAGE 9, EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT DEVELOPMENT OF US EXPORTS TO OMAN CONSTITUTES A THIRD, LONG-TERM INTEREST.

SECRET

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PAGE 04 MUSCAT 00208 290911Z

11. IN FACILITATING U.S. BUSINESS INTERESTS (PAGE 10), WE AGAIN COME TO RIDDLE OF DEALING WITH CORRUPT ELEMENTS. ESSENTIALLY, "MOVERS AND SHAKERS" IN OMANI COMMERCIAL WORLD ARE NOT ABOVE REPROACH. BEST WE CAN DO IS TO COUNSEL U.S. INTERESTS AGAINST PARTICIPATING IN CORRUPT PRACTICES, EVEN WHEN OMANI COUNTERPARTS MIGHT.

12. ON PAGE 11, EMBASSY QUESTIONS SPECIFICALLY IMPLIES ANTI-BRITISH BIAS. GOING BACK TO OUR EARLIER ASSESSMENT, WE WOULD PREFER POSITIVE STATEMENT ALONG LINES OF ENCOURAGING OMANI COMMERCIAL COMMUNITY TO CHECK OUT POSSIBLE U.S. SOURCES OF SUPPLY RATHER THAN CONTINUE TRADITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS UNQUESTIONINGLY.

13. FINALLY, TABLE ON PAGE 12 INDICATES AMERICAN STAFF

OF 12; CORRECT FIGURE IS II AND PRESENT PLAN IS TO
REMAIN AT THAT STRENGTH. THIS PRESUMES PEACE CORPS
DIRECTOR AND SCHEDULED NEW PEACE CORPS PROGRAM OFFICER
POSITIONS ARE INCLUDED IN PC FIGURES.
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